

**Letter of Agreement between the Vermont State Health Department
and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health,
Division of Respiratory Disease Studies**

This Letter of Agreement confirms the Vermont Department of Health memoranda of August 30, 2006 requesting technical assistance from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in the assessment of a potential occupational exposure.

In early June 2006, the Vermont Department of Health was called on to review health concerns among employees in the Bennington State Office Building. The primary concern was identified as sarcoidosis. Because sarcoidosis is a serious illness of unknown cause, the departments of Health and Buildings & General Services conducted an extensive investigation including health surveys, building inspection, environmental testing, and review of medical and death records. This investigation revealed that workers in the building have high rates of self-report of physician-diagnosed asthma and asthma symptoms. The Vermont Department of Health therefore requests technical assistance from NIOSH to perform pulmonary function testing to validate this finding. Pulmonary function testing should include spirometry (followed by administration of bronchodilator medication to assess for reversibility if baseline spirometry reveals airways obstruction), methacholine challenge testing, and diffusing capacity for carbon monoxide (DLCO).

Vermont Department of Health (VDH) Responsibilities:

- VDH will remain the lead agency in this investigation.
- VDH will handle all scheduling, interfacing with building representatives, data analysis, and reporting of the aggregate data.
- VDH will be the sole party to issue a report on findings from this investigation.
- VDH will reimburse the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC/NIOSH) up to \$10,000 for pulmonary function testing. This sum is to cover the estimated travel expenses for six NIOSH staff to test 100 to 130 workers over two weeks from September 18 through September 29, 2006. One of the six NIOSH staff will be a physician who will supervise the methacholine challenge testing. The physician will return to NIOSH after testing on Friday, September 22. A second NIOSH physician will travel on Sunday, September 24 to supervise the methacholine challenge testing through September 29. The per diem for Bennington is \$135/day which includes lodging (\$76) and meals (\$59; \$44.25 on travel days).
- VDH will purchase three boxes of mouthpieces (\$855); methacholine (\$300); and medical gases (\$900) and have them shipped to Morgantown, if needed.
- VDH will consider possible co-authorship with NIOSH staff for manuscript publication.

NIOSH Responsibilities

- NIOSH will perform research-quality pulmonary function testing to include spirometry (followed by administration of bronchodilator medication to assess for

reversibility if baseline spirometry reveals airways obstruction), methacholine challenge testing, and diffusing capacity for carbon monoxide (DLCO).

- NIOSH will provide quality control and quality assurance for pulmonary function results.
- NIOSH will pay salaries, supply the equipment, and travel the team in GSA cars.
- NIOSH will contribute the supply of carbon monoxide for DLCO testing.
- After quality review, NIOSH will send out letters to individual participants containing their results.
- NIOSH will provide VDH with personally identifiable testing results for data analysis. As part of obtaining informed consent for pulmonary function testing, NIOSH will disclose to test participants that their personally identifiable test results will be provided to VDH.

Cortland Lohff, M.D., M.P.H.
State Epidemiologist
Vermont Department of Health



David Weissman, M.D.
Director, Division of Respiratory Disease Studies
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health